

MS. WALSH: Hello, my name is Elizabeth Walsh and thank you for this opportunity to speak. Today, I'm offering comments from three perspectives. First, I'm an elected member of the board of directors of the National Sierra Club, one of the largest grassroots environmental organizations in the country with over half a million members and 2 million supporters. Our motto is to explore, enjoy, and protect our country's wild places. Our members have worked tirelessly to protect wild places, such as Escalante Grand Staircase National Monument to the proposed Bears Ears Monument in Utah. Our Utah members and those from across the country come to places like these to hike, camp, and to be inspired by nature. To protect these places for future generations, the Sierra Club is committed to slowing climate change and has spent countless volunteering staff hours advocating for a just transition to clean energy resources and a rapid transition away from our dependency on coal. And by "just," I mean providing new opportunities for coal workers and their families in a clean energy future. Second, I speak as a professional scientist who has dedicated my career to studying fresh water resources. Fresh water is our most valuable resource, more valuable than coal. And as the climate changes in the western US and places like Utah, we face uncertain water futures. For the Intermountain West, less rainfall is predicted and water will become more scarce. At the same time, we're faced with another challenge, water quality. If we continue to pollute our fresh water resources by burning dirty fuels like coal, we have even less high-quality fresh water available for human consumption, crop irrigation, and to support wildlife and aquatic life such as fisheries. As compounds like mercury are deposited in local water bodies by the use of fossil fuels, it accumulates up the food web and is concentrated into our predators like our trout and other fishes, making them unhealthy and unfit for human consumption. And, third, as a person warning Utah, I hold many fond memories of places near the proposed leasing areas. I have camped in the summer near Bryce and Panquitch and I have skied in the winter near the proposed Alton Mine. As you consider opening these and other areas to coal leasing, I urge you to carefully consider and study the negative impacts to our climate, our future water quality, and the economic consequences on the eco-tourism economy. Keep the coal in the ground. There are many viable clean energy alternatives to coal, especially in sunny Utah, that have much lower

environmental and health impacts on us, wildlife, and future generations of both. Thank you for this opportunity to speak today.